

FOREWORD

In 1960, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) established an Ad Hoc Interagency Advisory Committee on Correspondence Management. This committee prepared the first edition of the U.S. Government Correspondence Manual which GSA published. Similar interagency advisory committees were established in 1968, and again in 1977.

For this edition, GSA invited 80 Federal agencies to participate in a new Ad Hoc Interagency Advisory Committee on Correspondence Management. More than 30 agencies responded; some 50 Federal employees volunteered and attended committee meetings over a 2-year period.

The agency representatives were from two occupational groups: management analysts with responsibility for correspondence management in agency records management offices, and correspondence specialists from agency executive secretariats.

The committee thanks each individual for his or her contribution, with special recognition going to the following individuals:

The original draft of the Introduction was prepared by Diane R. Brady, Program Analyst, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury.

The following persons chaired working groups which revised the listed chapter: Chapter 1, Ellen E. Goss, Management Analyst, General Services Administration; Chapters 2 and 3, Adria A. Lipka, Management Analyst, National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Chapter 4, Bernadette Osolnick, Management Analyst, Minerals Management Service, Department of the Interior; Chapter 5, Robert C. McArtor, Chairman, Government Printing Office (GPO) Style Board.

The Bibliography was updated by Darwin Koester, Reference Librarian, General Services Administration. The entire project was prepared under the editorial direction of Committee Chairperson, Matthew Marmor, Chief, Records Management Branch, Information Resources Management Service, GSA.

INTRODUCTION

The *U.S. Government Correspondence Manual* provides Federal employees with guidelines for preparing correspondence. It serves to ensure compliance with the regulatory requirements of the Federal Information Resources Management Regulations (FIRMR), which states in subparagraph 201-9.103, that each Federal agency shall strive to “improve the quality, tone, clarity, and responsiveness of correspondence, and provide for its creation in a timely, economical, and efficient manner.”

Much of the Federal Government’s internal, interoffice, interagency, and public communications are conducted through the written word. Therefore, it is particularly important to compose letters and memorandums that are cordial, responsive, correctly written, and presentable. We must take positive action to meet high standards of correspondence in order to improve our efficiency and to render effective service to the public.

The *U.S. Government Correspondence Manual* is designed to simplify the preparation of official correspondence by achieving

uniform standards for Federal communication. These standards save time not only for authors, but also for typists and readers.

All correspondence must be planned and prepared carefully so that it can be read and understood with ease. The author should select the type of communication which best fits the purpose. Since the written word often forms the sole relationship between the sender and the recipient, it is essential that it create a favorable impression.

While many agencies have adopted their own custom-tailored “agency” correspondence manuals, this manual provides universal guidelines and procedures that are applicable throughout the entire Federal Government. It does not seek to supersede these “agency” manuals, but rather to provide additional working tools: to that end, it contains general requirements and instructions on the procedures and practices commonly used in the Federal Government. The information contained herein is applicable to all Federal employees who write, review, edit, sign, type, file, and control official correspondence.